

**The First World War****Section 2**

# American Power Tips the Balance

**Terms and Names**

**Selective Service Act** Law requiring men to register for military service

**convoy system** Having merchant ships travel in groups protected by warships

**American Expeditionary Force** The name given to the American military force that fought in World War I

**General John J. Pershing** The commander of the American Expeditionary force

**Eddie Rickenbacker** Famous American fighter pilot

**Alvin York** American war hero

**conscientious objector** A person who believes fighting is wrong and therefore does not want to serve in the military

**armistice** Truce agreement

**Before You Read**

In the last section, you learned how the United States was drawn into the war. In this section, you will read how Americans prepared to fight and how they helped the Allies win.

**As You Read**

Use a web diagram to take notes on how Americans responded to the war.

**AMERICA MOBILIZES**

(Pages 381–383)

**How did the U.S. prepare for war?**

The United States first needed to build up its armed forces. When war was declared, only about 200,000 men were in service. To solve this problem, Congress passed the **Selective Service Act**. It required men to register with the government so that some of them could be selected for military service. This process—called the draft—put about 3 million men in uniform.

Many African Americans served in the military. They were placed in separate

units, but some blacks were trained as officers. Blacks were among the first to receive the French honor of the Croix de Guerre.

Women were not drafted. The army would not let them join. But the navy accepted women in noncombat positions. Woman served as nurses, secretaries, and telephone operators.

The U.S. built ships to transport men and supplies to Europe. Shipyard workers were exempted from the draft and the importance of their work was publicized. Prefabrication techniques were used to speed the production of ships.

Section 2, *continued*

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1. How did the United States build up its armed forces?

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**AMERICA TURNS THE TIDE**

(Page 383)

**How did the United States help?**

To reduce the loss of ships to German submarine attacks, the United States and Britain began to use the **convoy system**. In this system, merchant ships traveled in a large group guarded by naval vessels.

American soldiers helped turn the tide of battle in Europe. The Allies had absorbed many casualties and were running out of men. Thousands of fresh American soldiers were eager for battle.

2. How did the United States help the Allies?

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**FIGHTING "OVER THERE"**

(Pages 384–385)

**What new weapons were used?**

The **American Expeditionary Force** was led by **General John J. Pershing**. American infantrymen were called doughboys because of the white belts they wore and cleaned with pipe clay, or "dough."

New weapons played a decisive role in the war. The two most innovative weapons were the tank and the airplane. Air warfare developed rapidly during the war. Pilots went from shooting at each other with pistols to using mounted machine guns.

**Eddie Rickenbacker** was an American ace pilot. He fought in 34 air battles and shot down 26 enemy planes.

3. Name two new weapons used in the war.

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**THE WAR INTRODUCES NEW HAZARDS** (Page 385)**What made World War I hard for soldiers?**

New weapons and tactics made World War I very destructive. Soldiers faced miserable conditions, including filth, trench foot, trench mouth, "shell shock" from constant bombardment, vermin, poison gas, and disease.

4. What hardships did soldiers face in World War I?

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**AMERICAN TROOPS GO ON THE OFFENSIVE** (Pages 386–387)**How did American troops help end the war?**

American soldiers arrived in Europe just in time to stop a German advance on Paris. One soldier from Tennessee, **Alvin York**, became a war hero for his actions in battle. At the start, York had been a **conscientious objector** (a person who opposes war on moral grounds), but he then agreed to fight. For his actions in battle he was promoted to sergeant and became a celebrity when he returned to the U.S.

Section 2, *continued*

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Germany, exhausted from the war, finally agreed to an **armistice** on November 11, 1918. The war took a bloody toll, killing more than 22 million and causing untold suffering.

5. How did American troops help end the war?

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Section 2, *continued*

As you read this section, write notes to answer questions about the American experience in World War I.

1. How did the United States raise an army?	2. How did U.S. soldiers help win the war?
3. How did the United States build its naval force?	4. How did the U.S. Navy help win the war?
5. What new weapons of mechanized warfare threatened those in combat?	

6. What did the war cost in terms of the number of...				7. What were the estimated economic costs?
civilian deaths?	military deaths?	injuries?	refugees?	